

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY REPORTS FIRST WEST NILE DEATH IN THE COUNTY

SAN BERNARDINO – On September 13, 2005, a sixty-four year old Redlands resident died of West Nile Virus (WNV). This unfortunate event is San Bernardino County's first death from West Nile Virus (WNV), and the 15th death statewide in 2005. The Redlands man also suffered from pre-existing medical conditions which increase the possibility of dying from the virus. It is unknown exactly where he contracted the virus.

The total number of cases this year in California at present is 735 of which San Bernardino County currently accounts for 27. A total of 830 human cases of WNV were identified in the State of California in 2004. The number of WNV cases in our county is dramatically lower this year than in 2004.

San Bernardino County Health Officer, Eric Frykman, M.D., said, "While the vast majority of people who contract West Nile Virus recover, it is not unexpected to have one or more deaths this year. While we are saddened at this gentleman's death, this is, again, a reminder that people need to be aware of WNV, and know the measures they can take to minimize exposure to mosquitoes and reduce the chance of becoming infected."

Since WNV is transmitted to humans through a mosquito bite, The San Bernardino County Vector Control Program is focusing on eliminating mosquitoes and mosquito-breeding sites. In areas where WNV is found, Vector Control monitors and eliminates mosquito habitats. Mosquito traps placed throughout the county are monitored regularly for an increase in mosquito population. Areas that have been fogged with have attained a 90% reduction in the number of mosquitoes. Dr. Frykman said, "The dramatic decrease in case numbers for San Bernardino County from 2004 can partly be attributed to aggressive vector control measures to protect the public's health."

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County Administrative Officer

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To prevent further cases of WNV, the Department of Public Health encourages people to take these precautions seriously:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Apply mosquito repellent with DEET according to label instructions. Products with at least 25% DEET will provide adequate protection under most conditions. For children over the age of two months, products with 10% DEET is effective.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding. Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Human-to-human transmission of WNV is limited to unusual situations such as blood transfusions and organ transplantation. Blood Banks have developed extensive screening tests of specimens for evidence of WNV. WNV is not directly transmitted from birds to humans, although the public is advised to not handle dead or dying birds.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV do not experience any illness. Only 20% of infections have mild symptoms, such as fever, rash, headache and body aches. Less than one percent of WNV infections will become severe. Death from WNV is uncommon, although seniors and individuals with impaired immune systems have a greater chance of dying from WNV infection. The public is advised to see their medical provider if they develop symptoms that could be from WNV.

Areas of standing water, including stagnant pools or ponds, old tires, buckets, and even leaky sprinklers, can be a breeding area for mosquitoes. The public may report areas of standing water to the San Bernardino County Vector Control Program at **800-44-ABATE**.

If you live in Chino, Chino Hills, Ontario, or Rancho Cucamonga, contact the West Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District at **909-635-0307**. For more information about WNV or to report dead birds, visit the California Department of Health Services website at **www.westnile.ca.gov**.

Since horses are susceptible to WNV and a vaccine is available for horses, horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations. Sick or dead horses should be evaluated for evidence of WNV infection.

Additional information about prevention of WNV infection and surveillance data is available from the San Bernardino County website at **www.sbcounty.gov/dehs/VECTORCONTROL**. For questions about WNV illness or for physicians to report a case, please call the Epidemiology Program at (909) 383-3050.

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